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*This beautiful picture of Gambel's White-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) was taken by hill resident and ardent birder, John Colbert, on one of his frequent treks with Erica Rutherford along the Ridge Trail (also known as the East-West Trail) of the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve.*

Both White- and Golden-crowned sparrows arrive in the area in September and stay until April. They are mostly ground or low vegetation feeders in mixed flocks with Dark-eyed juncos. While they eat primarily seeds in winter, we've watched them sally out from vegetation to catch insects.

Five subspecies of White-crowned sparrows are currently recognized. Our local subspecies is called Gambel's. Thomas Nuttall, a 19th century field naturalist named our western subspecies after his understudy, William Gambel, in 1840, when William was 17. Gambel went on to become a medical doctor before dying of Typhoid fever in Plumas County in 1849—at age 26.